

January 2024

# WILD KIDS

SEASONAL NATURE EDUCATION FOR KIDS & THEIR GROWN UPS



2024 Wild Bucket List

2024 Sky in Pixels

Wild Plant ID Quiz

January Nature  
Treasure Hunt

Foraging Cattails  
& Kudzu

Plus seasonal  
poems, activities,  
nature journal pages  
and more!

# From the editor

BY ALICIA BAYER

Happy 2024! What are you hoping to do in the wild this year? If you need some ideas on fun ways to play and learn outside this year, we have lots of ideas in this issue.

Every year we have a theme of the wild plants we feature in each issue. The first year it was general great wild foods to forage. We also had years of herbs, flowers and wild mushrooms. This year, the focus is on ways to use invasive plants, both for food and for other really cool purposes like crafting.

Please write me and tell me if there's anything you'd like us to feature in the magazine. You can also send in artwork, photos, poetry or letters. I love to hear from you and would love to share your stuff in Wild Kids!

Wherever you are, I hope you have a wonderful month and a wonderful year, full of wild adventures!

*~ Alicia*



Why is Wild Kids free?

Kids (and their grown ups) need nature, and nature needs us! Our family believes in the importance of sharing & helping each other, and of passing on skills to help our world and each other. As long as we are able, we plan to produce Wild Kids to help do this for families who find it useful.

All materials copyright Alicia Bayer and Wild Kids Magazine.

This publication is free for personal use.

Contact: [alicia.bayer@gmail.com](mailto:alicia.bayer@gmail.com)

[www.magicalchildhood.com/wildkids](http://www.magicalchildhood.com/wildkids).

Find lots more links, information and fun to accompany this month's themes at [www.magicalchildhood.com/wildkids](http://www.magicalchildhood.com/wildkids).

# Go Wild in January

10 WAYS TO LEARN AND PLAY WITH NATURE THIS MONTH

*Color in the ones you do!*

Stay up late on January 4th to look for the Quadrantid meteor shower's peak around 11:30

Take a nature photo outside each day this month

Catch snowflakes or seeds on black paper and look at them up close

Take pictures from the highest place you can safely climb and from down on the ground

Gather wildflower seeds & try sprouting them in pots inside

Start tracking all the birds you spot in 2024 and see if you can see 100 kinds this year

Find some wild vines to wrap into a wreath or crown

Check out 10 nature and foraging books from the library & find your favorite

Make a personal goal of how many hours you want to spend outside this year and start tracking it

Measure your shadow at noon each day & see how it changes

# NAME MORE WILD PLANTS!

How many helpful wild plants can you identify? Here are 24 common wild edible and medicinal plants and mushrooms. Can you match the plants to their names?

A Cattails

B Violets

C Nettles

D Dead Nettle

E Mullein

F Ramps

G Chickweed

H Morels

I Sumac

J Hawthorn

K Lambsquarters

L Black raspberries

M Purslane

N Elderberries

O Acorns

P Chicken of the woods

Q Oyster mushrooms

R Milkweed

S Spruce tips

T Crab apples

U Mulberries

V Cleavers

W Plantain leaf

X Walnuts



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_



(Answers on the back page.)



# JANUARY NATURE TREASURE HUNT

Head out into nature and see what you can find for each category. Draw them or write them in the box. We have an example for each one.

Living

Non living

Once Living



Owl



Icicle



Antler

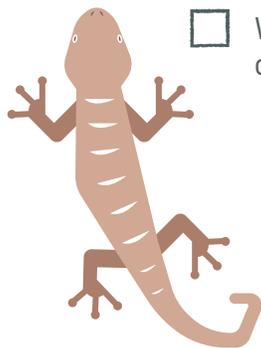


# 2024



# Nature Bucket List

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watch a sunset                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Make mudpies                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Start a rock collection  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plant flowers                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Camp in the back yard                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Start a bird ID log      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make nature art                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Take a nature photo                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Look for animal tracks   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have a picnic                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Walk in the rain                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Forage something new     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go mushroom hunting                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Help out on a Citizen Science project | <input type="checkbox"/> Read a book about nature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Climb a tree                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch a meteor shower                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Watch a sunrise          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go on a moonlit walk                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Visit a new park                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Go to the beach          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Fly a kite                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Howl at the moon                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Pick up litter           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Have a campfire                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Cook over a campfire                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Play in the mud          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Spend a whole day outside            | <input type="checkbox"/> Go rock hunting or shell collecting   | <input type="checkbox"/> Have breakfast outside   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Watch a storm                        | <input type="checkbox"/> Go sledding or surfing                | <input type="checkbox"/> Plant a vegetable garden |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Make sun tea                         | <input type="checkbox"/> Feed ducks or seagulls                | <input type="checkbox"/> Make sand castles        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go hiking                            | <input type="checkbox"/> Make a mushroom spore print           | <input type="checkbox"/> Splash in puddles        |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Cloud watch                          | <input type="checkbox"/> Go berry picking                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Explore a cave           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Build a snow fort or outdoor shelter | <input type="checkbox"/> Pull invasive weeds                   | <input type="checkbox"/> Start a nature journal   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go boating                           | <input type="checkbox"/> Look for 4 leaf clovers               | <input type="checkbox"/> Paint or draw outside    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Whistle with blades of grass         | <input type="checkbox"/> -----                                 | <input type="checkbox"/> Make homemade ice cream  |
|   | <input type="checkbox"/> -----                                 |   |



# Foraging Invasive Plants

**Invasive plants are plants that are not native to an area and cause damage.** A lot of the time, people bring invasive plants to a place because they think they will be helpful.



For instance:

- Immigrants from Europe brought dandelion seeds to the United States because dandelions were a healthy food source that were easy to grow. They quickly took over and now there are dandelions in every lawn, park and wild place you can find.
- The United States government planted kudzu for about twenty years to reduce erosion and grow an easy crop to feed livestock before they figured out that it quickly became a weed that destroyed buildings, trees and other plants.



Invasive plants are called that because they invade -- they take over and they are kind of bullies.

That doesn't mean that they don't have uses though! A lot of times we can use those plants for food, crafts and other uses. Harvesting them helps the other plants in the area, and it helps us make use of something that was just being a pest otherwise.

This year, we'll be focusing on all kinds of invasive plants that you can forage, pick, pull up and use all you like for all kinds of cool stuff.

**What are the invasive plants where you live? What can you use them for to make room for other plants and make the most of them?**

# KUDZU

(Pueraria Montana)

“The vine that ate the south”



Kudzu is native to Asia and it has a lot of really great things about it -- if it wasn't such a bully! It has been used for medicine for thousands of years, and also used to feed livestock and even for food.

It was brought to the United States in the 1800s to feed animals like pigs, goats and rabbits who love it. It's an easy, healthy source of food for them. The U.S. government even planted it to control erosion for many years. Crafters also use it to make baskets.



But it also is a real pest! It quickly takes over an area and chokes out all the other plants, even the trees. It even takes down buildings!

It's become such a problem that even though people know that it does have a lot of good things about it, in many places it's illegal to even move it to another area to feed to your animals because of the risk that it will spread even more.

If you have kudzu growing where you live, you can use it for many things. If you have pets like rabbits or livestock like pigs, they will love it and it's good for them. People can also eat almost all parts of kudzu except for its seeds and seed pods. Eat the planet says:

***Kudzu leaves, shoots, flowers, and roots are edible and safe to eat. Within Japan, the plant is even considered a staple vegetable. The leaves and young shoots can be served raw or cooked. You could add them into a salad or stir fry, or chop and add them to soups and stews. The shoots in particular work very well when deep-fried.***

*Then, much like the common arrowroot, kudzu roots are also full of edible starch. This starch is a powerful thickening agent which can be used in soups, stews, and sauces. Kudzu starch is also gluten-free, making it a great wheat flour substitute for those with a gluten allergy or intolerance.*

*Lastly, the fragrant blossoms can be served raw, cooked, or pickled. These flowers can be used as an edible garnish on salads and desserts and at the same time, they can also be made into jelly, syrup, and candy.*

KUDZU  
(*Pueraria Montana*)



# NARROW LEAF CATTAILS

(*Typha angustifolia*)



**Common cattail (*Typha latifolia*) is one of our favorite wild plants to forage.**

They grow in marshes and wetlands all over the Northern Hemisphere. They are considered “good guy” plants in wetlands and they also are a great source of wild food in all seasons. Famous forager Euell Gibbons once called them nature’s grocery store!

- The roots are starchy and can be dried, ground, and used for flour.
- The inner core of the base can be cooked and eaten like asparagus.
- The young spikes can be eaten like corn on the cob.
- The yellow pollen can also be used as a flour substitute (we like to use it in place of some of the flour in pancakes!).
- The fluff can be used for starting fires and is an excellent insulator.
- Some Native American tribes used the pounded roots as a poultice for wounds.
- Cattails were also used to make mats, boats, rope, baskets and more.

**But there is an invasive lookalike.** Narrowleaf cattail (*Typha angustifolia*, also called lesser bulrush or lesser reedmace) is originally from Europe and Asia. Wetlands managers call this type of cattail a “bad guy” plant.

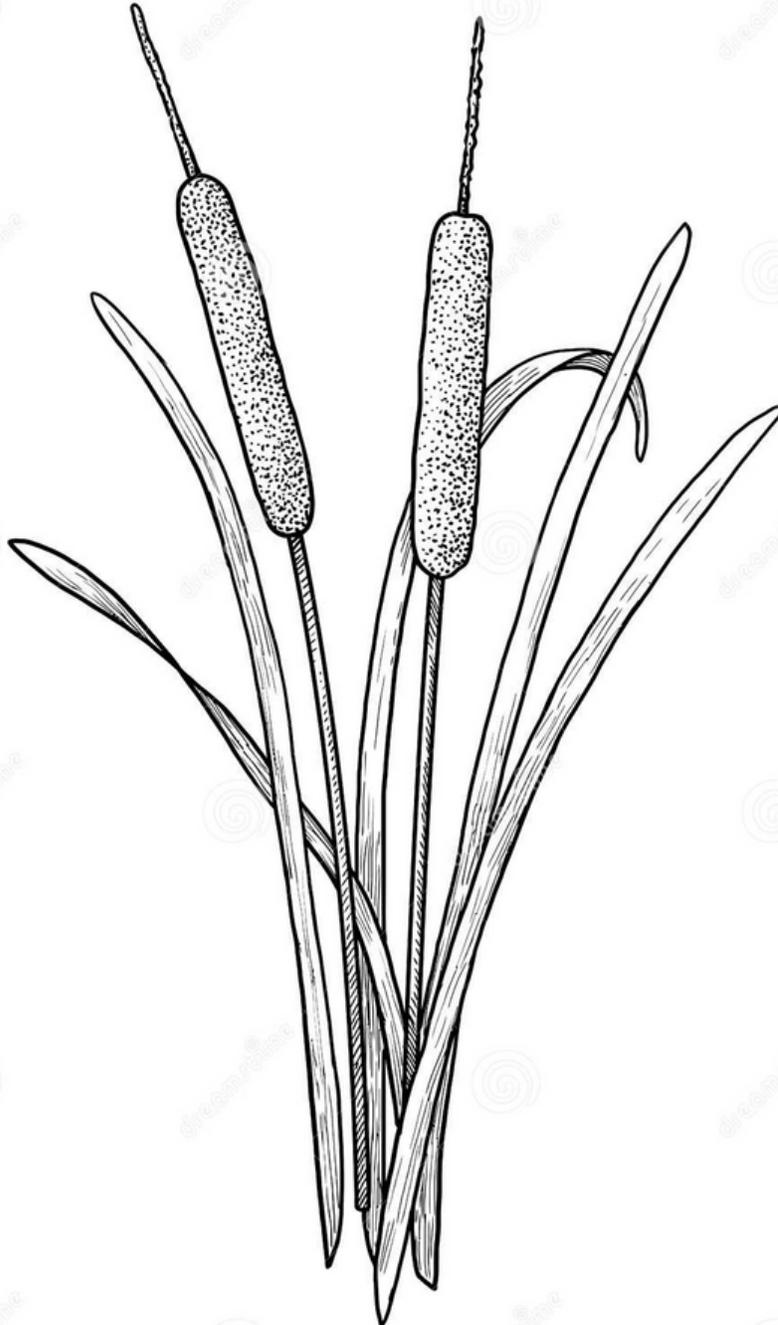
Narrowleaf cattails were originally used as a decorative landscape plant, but the seeds blow the same way common cattails do, so in time it spread all over. It can hybridize with common cattail and it quickly takes over wetlands and crowds out the other types of plants.

It can be hard to tell the types of cattails apart. Narrowleaf cattails often have much skinnier leaves and there is a gap on the flower spike, but since they cross-breed so easily it’s not always easy to tell. Wetlands managers say to look at the area -- if cattails are taking over, they are probably narrowleaf.

**Narrow leaf cattails can be used the same way as common cattails.**

If you harvest cattails, be sure you harvest from clean water and that they haven’t been treated with an herbicide.

NARROW LEAF CATTAILS  
(Typha angustifolia)



# Poems for January



The More It Snows  
By A. A. Milne  
(The House at Pooh Corner)

The more it snows (Tiddely pom),  
The more it goes (Tiddely pom),  
The more it goes (Tiddely pom),  
On snowing.

And nobody knows (Tiddely pom),  
How cold my toes (Tiddely pom),  
How cold my toes (Tiddely pom),  
Are growing.

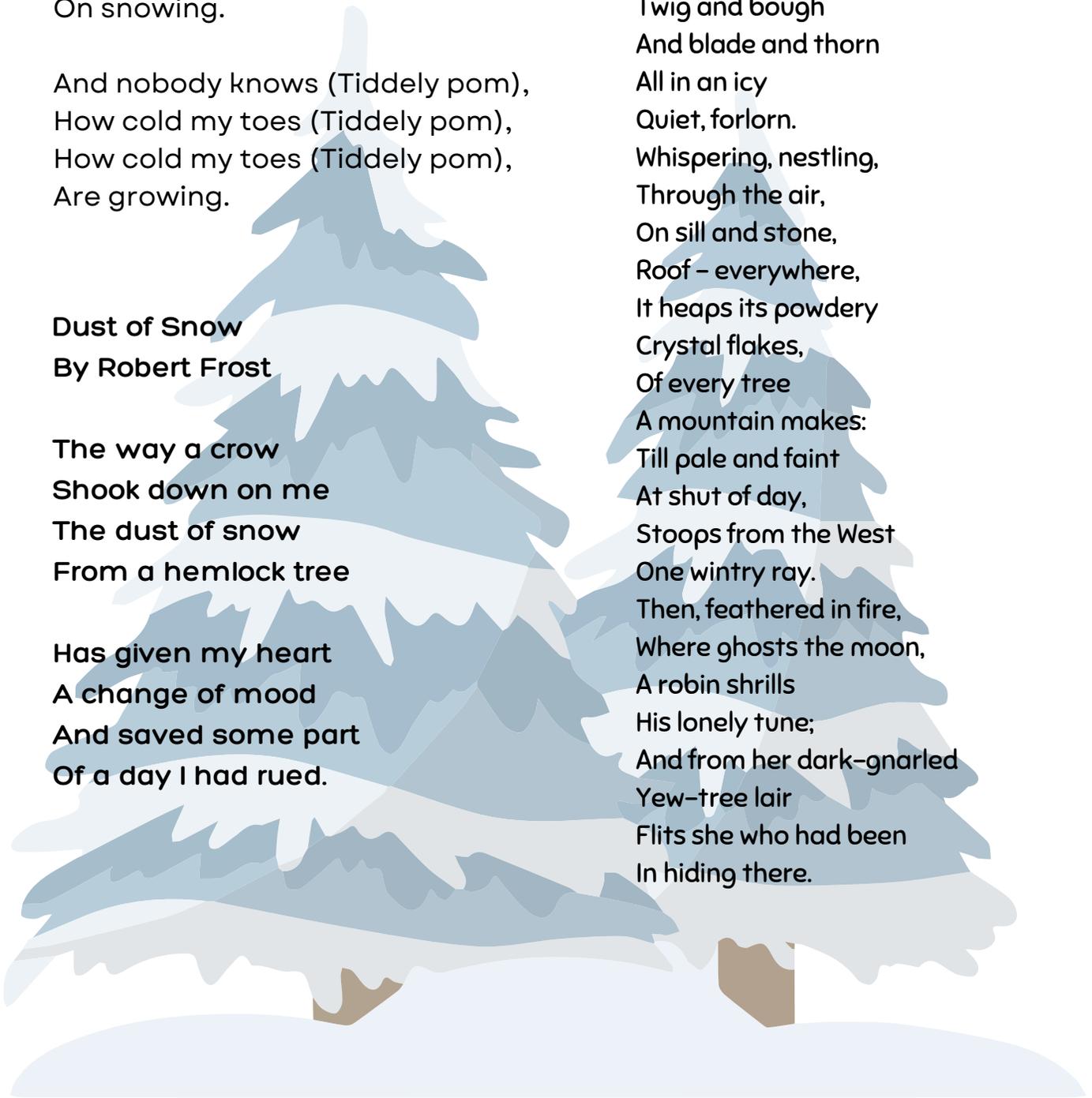
Dust of Snow  
By Robert Frost

The way a crow  
Shook down on me  
The dust of snow  
From a hemlock tree

Has given my heart  
A change of mood  
And saved some part  
Of a day I had rued.

Snow  
By Walter De La Mare

No breath of wind,  
No gleam of sun –  
Still the white snow  
Swirls softly down –  
Twig and bough  
And blade and thorn  
All in an icy  
Quiet, forlorn.  
Whispering, nestling,  
Through the air,  
On sill and stone,  
Roof – everywhere,  
It heaps its powdery  
Crystal flakes,  
Of every tree  
A mountain makes:  
Till pale and faint  
At shut of day,  
Stoops from the West  
One wintry ray.  
Then, feathered in fire,  
Where ghosts the moon,  
A robin shrills  
His lonely tune;  
And from her dark-gnarled  
Yew-tree lair  
Flits she who had been  
In hiding there.



# January

## Nature Journal



# Phenology Calendar

Keep track of things you observe in nature that you see this month!  
Write in observances like these or draw a picture if you like.

- Owl heard at night
- Lady beetle crawling on inside window
- 6 inches of snowfall
- Rabbit droppings spotted in back yard
- Bald eagles seen flying over open waters

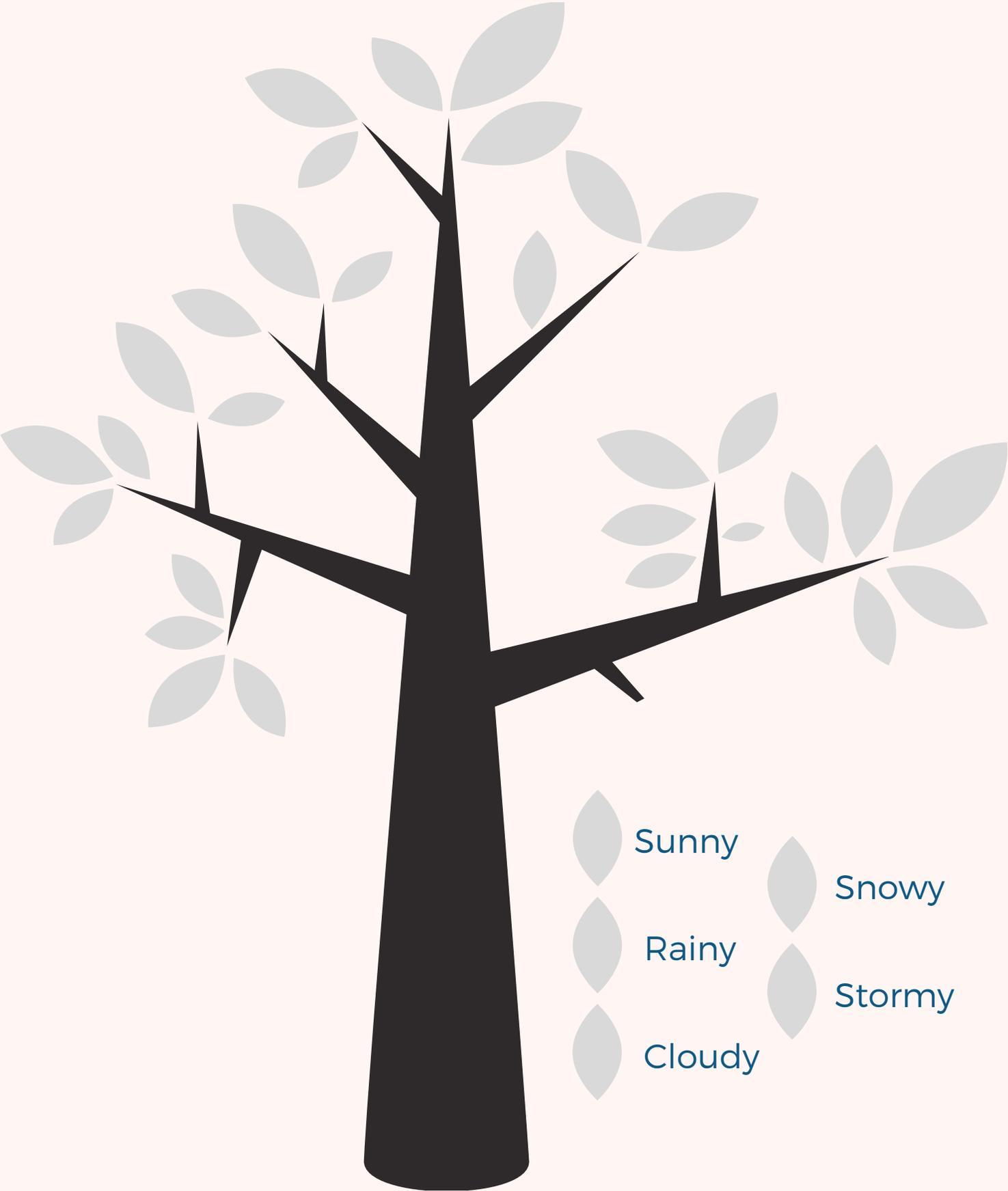


- Green ferns peeking out of the snow
- Woodpeckers eating bugs on trees
- Deer tracks in snow at state park
- Wild turkeys in the field
- Record high temperature for this day

## JANUARY 2024

| SUNDAY | MONDAY | TUESDAY | WEDNESDAY | THURSDAY | FRIDAY | SATURDAY |
|--------|--------|---------|-----------|----------|--------|----------|
|        | 1      | 2       | 3         | 4        | 5      | 6        |
| 7      | 8      | 9       | 10        | 11       | 12     | 13       |
| 14     | 15     | 16      | 17        | 18       | 19     | 20       |
| 21     | 22     | 23      | 24        | 25       | 26     | 27       |
| 28     | 29     | 30      | 31        |          |        |          |

# January Weather Tree



# January Bird List

Birds spotted this month

# January Animal List

Mammals, reptiles & other wildlife spotted this month

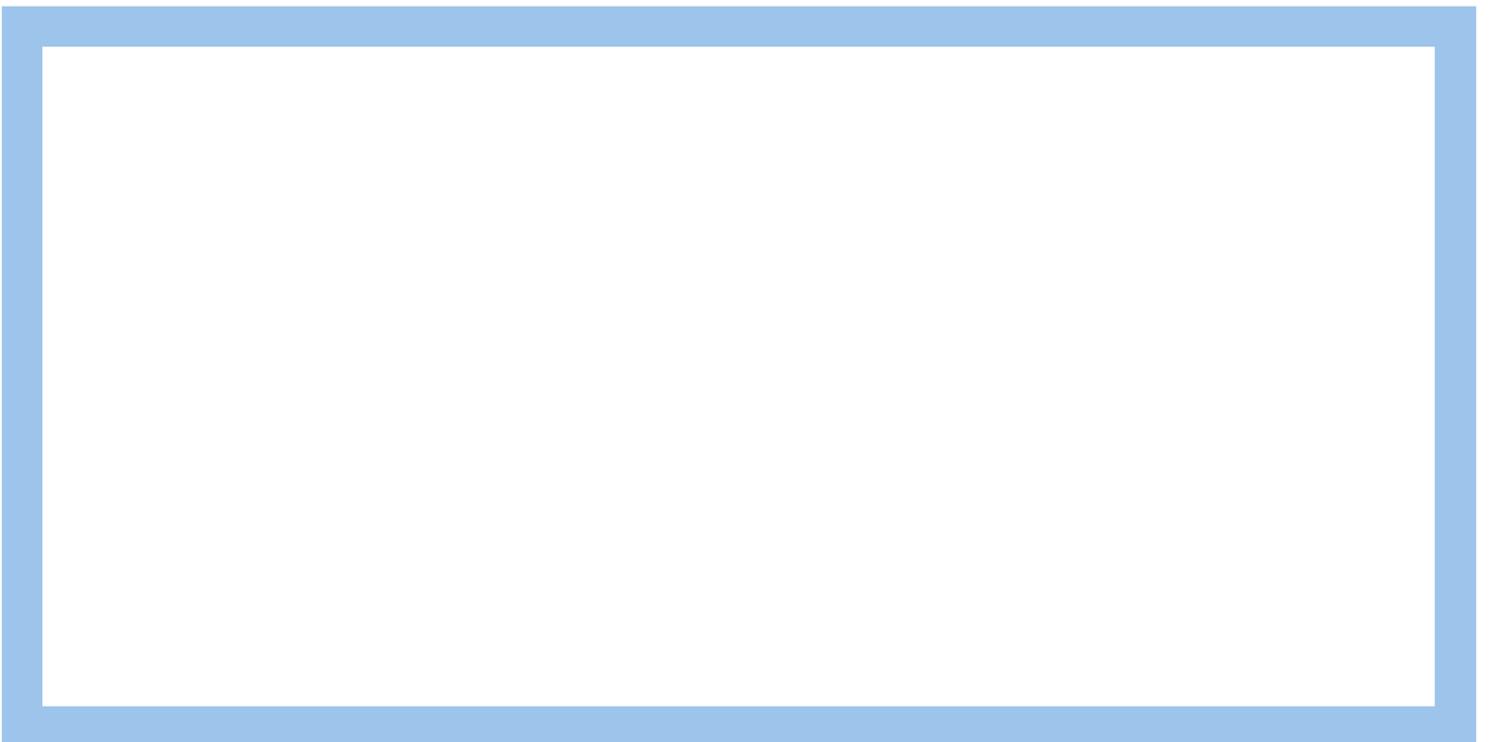
# January Nature Notes

Record any interesting discoveries here -- plants you identify, foods you forage, outdoor activities, cool nature projects, nature books read, or just notes about what it's like outside this week!

## Week 1 Sketches & Observations



## Week 2 Sketches & Observations



*Week 3 Sketches & Observations*



*Week 4 Sketches & Observations*



# MY FORAGING GUIDE FOR:

---

GENERAL SKETCH OF THE PLANT

CLOSE-UP SKETCHES OF PLANT PARTS

LATIN NAME \_\_\_\_\_

WHERE FOUND \_\_\_\_\_

PARTS USED \_\_\_\_\_

LOOKALIKES & HOW TO POSITIVELY ID:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

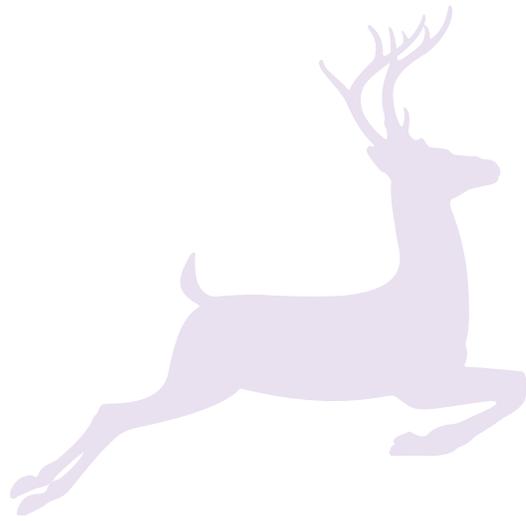
WARNINGS: \_\_\_\_\_

FORAGING RECORD (DATES, WHERE FOUND, HOW IT WAS USED)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

MY RATING FOR THIS PLANT





Answers to the Wild Plant ID quiz:

XBEJ

KIHA

CLFG

OMWR

NPST

VUDQ

Want to see your stuff in Wild Kids?

We welcome articles, photos, artwork and other submissions from kids and their grown ups.

Send your submissions, letters or to [alicia.bayer@gmail.com](mailto:alicia.bayer@gmail.com)